



# GHIAA

Greater Hartford  
— Interfaith —  
Action Alliance

## **GHIAA Testimony Guide – Spring 2023 Mental Health / HUSKY 4 Immigrants**

(updated 2/9/23)

Thank you for submitting testimony in support of **H.B. 6616, “An Act Concerning Expansion of HUSKY Health Benefits to Those Ineligible Due to Immigration Status.”** This bill will expand coverage for income-eligible people, regardless of immigration status, until age 21 (as of Jan. 1, 2024) and then until age 26 (as of Jun. 1, 2024). This is an important next step toward the goal of ultimately achieving coverage for all Connecticut residents.

You can [track this bill online](#) to follow its progress and see the most updated language.

A public hearing for this bill will be held on **Tuesday, February 14, 2023**, beginning at 11:00 AM in Room 2C of the Legislative Office Building (300 Capitol Ave, Hartford). There will be a press conference organized by our HUSKY 4 Immigrants partners at 9:00 in Room 1D of the LOB that morning. Wear your GHIAA shirts!

The following pages will guide you through the issue and the testimony process. This packet includes:

- Issue fact sheet
- Step by step instructions
- Testimony template
- Additional resources

If you have questions about testifying on this issue, please contact Rev. Jocelyn Gardner Spencer, GHIAA organizer, at [jgardnerspencer@cljct.org](mailto:jgardnerspencer@cljct.org) or 860-527-9860 x108.

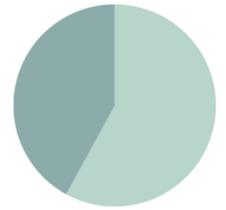
# Mental Health Issue Campaign

## HUSKY 4 Immigrants

### GHIAA's Action



GHIAA has joined the HUSKY 4 Immigrants coalition, fighting to expand access to HUSKY insurance for income-eligible people, regardless of immigration status.



**58% of the 113,000 undocumented residents of CT do not have health insurance**

### Issue Basics

1. Of the **561,000** adults in CT with a mental health condition, **160,000** did not receive their needed care.  
**1/3** of these people went without care because of cost.



2. The absence of health insurance makes affording mental health care nearly impossible. Paying out of pocket is unaffordable even for middle-income people, let alone for folks with lower incomes.

3. Being a member of a marginalized community – by race, gender, sexuality, ability, immigration status, etc. – increases the risk of mental health challenges due to systemic oppression.



4. If we win, an estimated **21,400** CT residents will gain coverage.

### Resources

[1] <https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/StateFactSheets/ConnecticutStateFactSheet.pdf>  
[2] <https://universalhealthct.org/application/files/4016/5774/2108/Presentation.Short.UHCT.f.2022.07.07.pdf>  
[3] [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA1964-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1964-1.html)  
[4] <https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/the-contributions-of-new-americans-in-connecticut/>

## What About the Cost?

The cost of expanding HUSKY to all income-eligible people, regardless of immigration status, would represent only 3% of the state's annual Medicaid budget, and would be offset significantly by savings in current medical expenditures.

|  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| Estimated Cost of Expanding HUSKY                              | \$83 million      |
| Estimated SAVINGS for Uncompensated Care                       | \$63-\$72 million |
| Current Cost for Emergency Medicaid (would drop significantly) | \$15 million      |
| Connecticut Taxes Paid Annually by Undocumented Immigrants     | \$145 million     |

### Who is Covered Now?

- As of April 1, 2022, undocumented pregnant individuals
- As of January 1, 2023, undocumented children up to age 12
- As of April 1, 2023, undocumented people who give birth will have 1 year of postpartum access

### Who is Left Out?

- Undocumented adolescents
- Undocumented adults
- Legally present immigrants who have lived in the US for fewer than 5 years
- Asylum seekers with pending cases (a process that takes years to resolve)

## Why This Matters

*“When a foreigner resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress them. The foreigner who resides with you shall be to you as the native-born among you; you shall love the foreigner as yourself, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt.” – Leviticus 19:33-34*

The Hebrew scriptures are very clear in their teaching that strangers and foreigners are to be treated well, to be offered hospitality, to be fed and clothed and nurtured just as citizens. Drawing on the Israelites' experience of oppression and terrible mistreatment when they were foreigners in Egypt, these codes of community conduct insist that the people of God must not repeat this injustice, but must act in solidarity with the strangers and foreigners among us.

*“Mary brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.” – Luke 2:7*

*“Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt.” – Matthew 2:14*

For Christians, the story of Jesus begins as the story of people displaced from their home with no access to health care. Forced to travel near the end of her pregnancy, Mary gives birth in a barn, with no record of the presence of a midwife or other attendant. Immediately thereafter, the family flees to Egypt to escape King Herod's infanticidal decree. Surely to follow Jesus means to see the face of Christ in our immigrant neighbors who seek the safety and health care they need and deserve.

## Step by Step Testimony Instructions

### Written Testimony

1. Compose your written testimony. You can begin with the template on page 5-6 of this packet, then customize it with your personal story, faith perspective, and further details.
2. Submit your written testimony at the following website:  
[https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/CGATestimonySub/CGAtestimonysubmission.aspx?comm\\_code=hs](https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/CGATestimonySub/CGAtestimonysubmission.aspx?comm_code=hs)  
Written testimony may be submitted up to 7 days after the hearing. We encourage you to submit it by the hearing date.

### Human Services Committee Written Testimony Submission

Note: To submit your testimony anonymously, use anonymous for the first and last name.

★First Name

Title

★Hearing Date and Time  
Select Hearing Date  
**Choose 2/14/23 from drop-down menu**

★Bill Number(s) (Hold down CTRL key to select multiple bills.)

★Last Name

Organization or Agency (If Applicable)

★Supports or Opposes  
 Supports **Be sure to choose Supports here**  
 Opposes  
 General Comments

★How do I want to submit my testimony?  
 Type In My Testimony **If you prefer to copy and paste, choose this option and a box will appear**  
 Upload A File I Select

Testimony File (Microsoft Word files are accepted; PDF files are preferred.)  
 No file chosen  
Click the icon to see how you can save documents as PDFs

**If you prefer to upload a PDF or Word doc, use this button to choose your file**

I'm not a robot reCAPTCHA Privacy - Terms  
**Check this box to show that you're a real human!**

**Click Submit when you're done**

### Oral Testimony

1. If you wish to offer oral testimony, either in person or via Zoom, you must [register online at this link](#) by 3pm on Monday, February 13.
2. If you are testifying orally, please also submit written testimony by the date of the hearing. Modify your oral remarks to be story-based, personal, and less detailed than the written testimony.
3. The speaker order for oral testimony will be randomly generated and will be posted on the [Human Services Committee website](#) the evening before the hearing.
4. GHIAA staff will help you track your assigned speaking slot so you don't have to wait around all day. Let us know you are testifying so we can give you a heads-up when your turn is coming.

## Testimony Template

Follow the format below as you compose your written testimony. You may choose from the talking points included or feel free to add your own. Then, [submit your testimony online here](#).

### DATE

Written Testimony Submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly Joint Human Services Committee in support of HB 6616: An Act Concerning Expansion of HUSKY Health Benefits to Those Ineligible Due to Immigration Status.

Co-Chairs Senator Lesser and Representative Gilchrist, Ranking Members Senator Seminara and Representative Case, and Distinguished Members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is **NAME** and I live in **TOWN**. I am a member of **CONGREGATION**, and my congregation is a member of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA), a broad-based organization of 49 faith institutions working together to advance social justice in our region and state.

I am writing in support of HB 6616: An Act Concerning Expansion of HUSKY Health Benefits to Those Ineligible Due to Immigration Status.

Personally, this issue matters to me because... **[express your personal experience or faith perspective, choosing from the following or adding your own]**

- I have personal experience with mental health challenges. **[elaborate as you wish]**
- I have personal experience with being uninsured/underinsured. **[elaborate as you wish]**
- My faith teaches me that every human being is a child of God and deserves to be cared for accordingly, regardless of their race, national origin, citizenship, or immigration status.
- My faith teaches me that it is the responsibility of a society to provide life-saving care to its members. I believe that health care is not only a human right, but a sacred duty.

I support this bill because: **[choose one or more of the following, and feel free to use your own words]**

- I am particularly concerned about the crisis of mental health. Without insurance, it is nearly impossible to access mental health care. It's hard enough to find care when you have coverage, but our uninsured neighbors are left with even fewer resources. Paying out of pocket is unaffordable even for middle-income people, let alone for folks with lower incomes. According to NAMI-CT, of the 561,000 adults in Connecticut with a mental health condition, 160,000 went without needed care in the past year, and one-third of those went did so because of cost.
- Many members of the immigrant community, including 58% of undocumented folks in our state, are without any form of health insurance to cover mental or physical health care (compared to just 5% of the overall population). In addition, being a member of a marginalized community increases the risk of mental health challenges due to the impacts of prejudice and systemic oppression. Meanwhile, undocumented people pay \$187 million annually in Connecticut taxes.

- Unlike some private coverage, HUSKY insurance offers true mental health parity, covering mental health on par with physical health. Expanding access to HUSKY by passing HB 6616 will provide critical access to care, including for adolescents and young adults, during the years when major mental health disorders often emerge.
- According to an independent analysis by the RAND Corporation, if Connecticut expands HUSKY to all income-qualified people, regardless of immigration status, roughly 21,400 currently uninsured people will gain coverage, providing vast benefits in quality of life, family stability, school attendance, workforce participation, and more. This cost of this expansion would represent only 3% of the state’s annual Medicaid budget. Furthermore, much of this cost would be balanced out by savings in expenses for emergency Medicaid and uncompensated care.
- Extending insurance access until age 26, as this bill does, would match the provisions of the Affordable Care Act, whose policymakers recognized that emerging adults (including parents, workers, and students), their families, and society as a whole do better when people have continuous access to care during this period. This best practice should be applied to all, regardless of immigration status.
- Expanding HUSKY to undocumented people is not a controversial issue and is supported by a majority of CT voters. 57% of voters support expanding HUSKY to all undocumented immigrants, including 84% of Democrats, 83% of Black voters, and 76% of Latinx voters.

Expanding HUSKY access to all income-eligible people, regardless of immigration status, will meaningfully expand access to mental (as well as physical) health care to people who are currently excluded. It is economically sensible, and more than that, it is the moral, just, and faithful thing to do. HB 6616 is an important step in this direction. Please advance this bill out of committee in its current form, and then champion it in the full legislature. I look forward to supporting your efforts.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

**YOUR NAME**

**HOME ADDRESS**

## **Additional Resources**

[Talking Points HB 6616 Public Hearing](#) (HUSKY 4 Immigrants Coalition)

[Fact Sheet on Coverage, Cost and Savings, and Opinion Polling](#) (HUSKY 4 Immigrants Coalition)

[Summary of Polling and Cost Research](#) (Universal Health Care Foundation of CT)

[Immigrant Coverage Poll Fact Sheet](#) (Universal Health Care Foundation of CT)

[More Details on Opinion Polling](#) (Universal Health Care Foundation of CT)

[Analysis of Coverage and Cost Impact](#) (RAND Corporation)

[Mental Health in Connecticut](#) (National Alliance for Mental Illness)